

Size and Characteristics of States' Union Workforces

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Unionization rates – and the gender and racial composition of unionized workers – vary widely across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The figures and tables below, based on our analysis of the Current Population Survey, give an overview of the size and basic demographics of the unionized workforce in each state. Throughout, we define a unionized worker as anyone who is a member of a union or represented by a collective bargaining agreement.

Size of the States' Union Workforces

Figure 1 gives the total number of unionized workers in each state in 2011. Of the country's approximately 16.3 million unionized workers, California had the largest share at around 2.5 million. Close behind was New York with about 2.1 million. Other union strongholds were Illinois (about 929,000), Pennsylvania (about 845,000), Ohio (about 706,000) and Michigan (about 703,000). Texas and New Jersey both had about 642,000 unionized workers (though very different unionization rates, as we'll see below). The states with the ninth and tenth largest union workforces were a similar pair: Washington and Florida, both with about 557,000 each, but once again, with very different unionization rates. The five states with the smallest union populations were Idaho (about 36,000), District of Columbia (about 28,000), North Dakota (about 27,000), South Dakota (about 23,000), and Wyoming (about 21,000).

Figure 2 shows a second way of looking at the data. The figure gives the unionization rate or the share of the workforce in each state that is either a union member or covered by a collective bargaining agreement. In 2011, the unionization rate for the United States as a whole was 13.3 percent. New York State had the highest unionization rate, at 26.4 percent. Alaska (24.3 percent) and Hawaii (24.0 percent) followed closely. Only one other state had a unionization rate above 20 percent, and that was Washington (21.2 percent). The rest of the top ten most-unionized states were Michigan (19.2 percent), New Jersey (18.8 percent), California (18.5 percent), Connecticut (17.6 percent), and Oregon and Rhode Island (17.4 percent each). Eight states had a unionization rate that was less than half of the national average: Tennessee (6.2 percent), Texas (6.1 percent), Arkansas and Louisiana (5.9 percent each), South Carolina (5.7 percent), Virginia (5.3 percent), Georgia (5.1 percent) and North Carolina (4.4 percent).



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FIGURE 1
Number of Unionized Workers by State, 2011

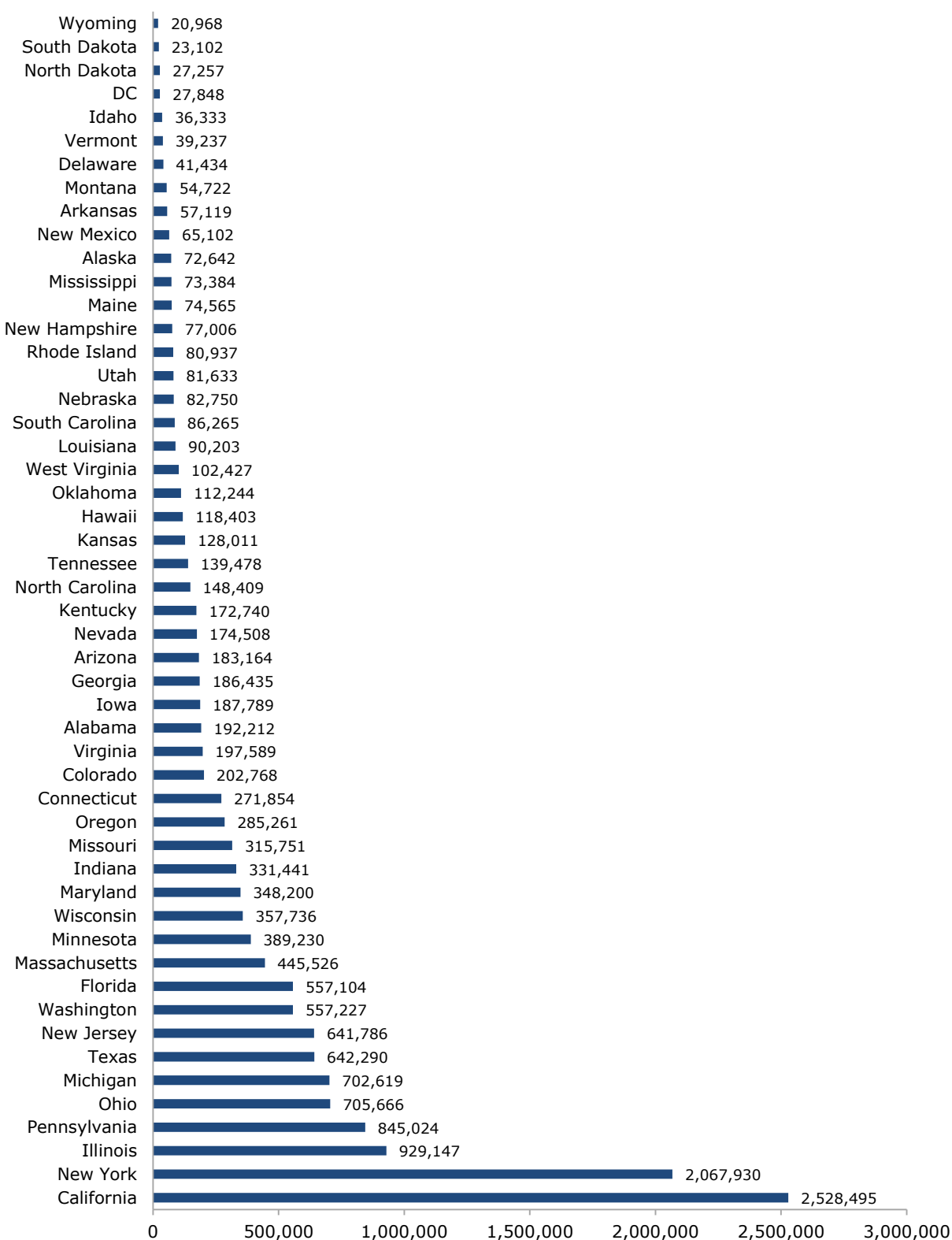
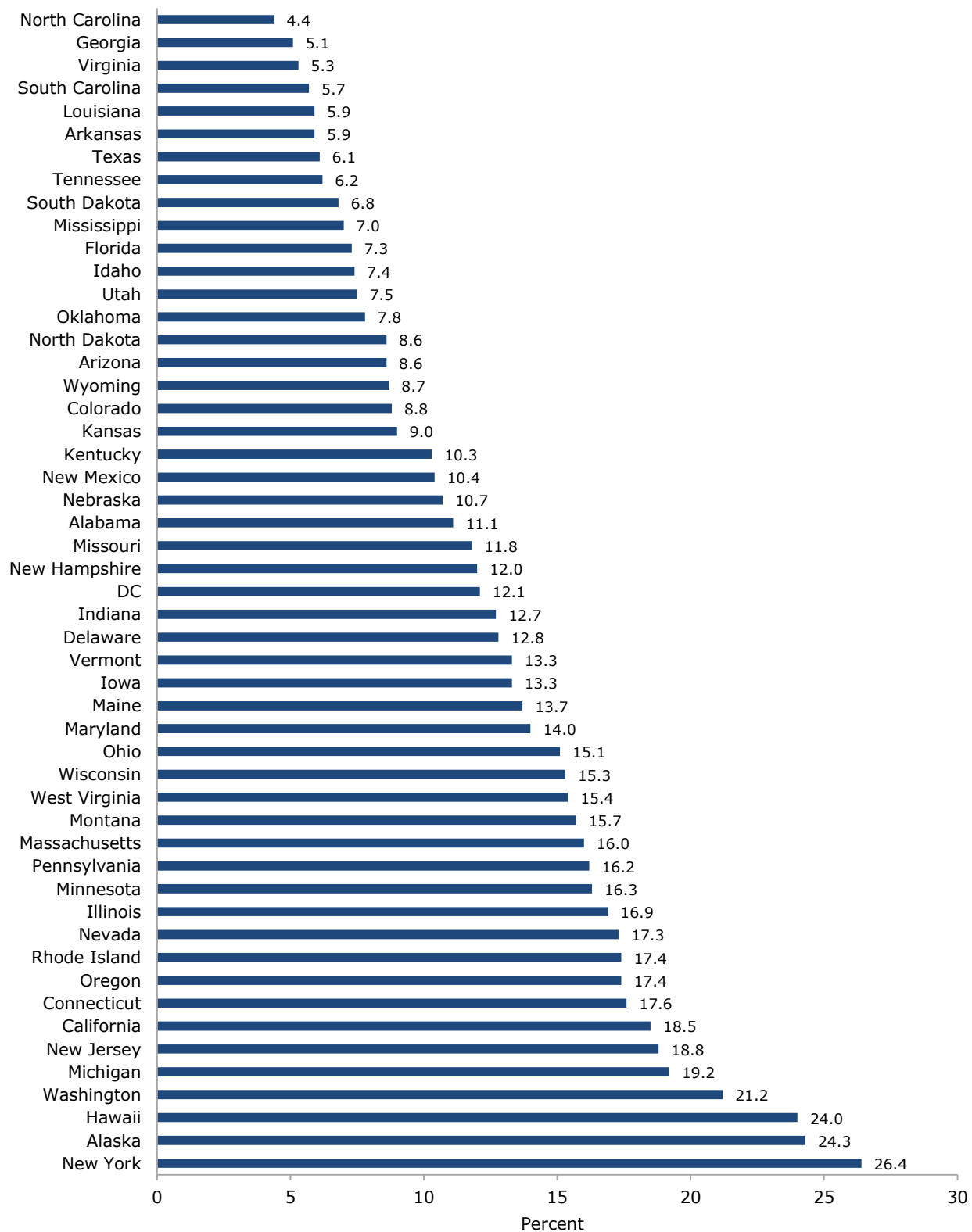


FIGURE 2
Unionization Rate by State, 2011



Characteristics of the States' Union Workforces

Table 1 presents basic demographic data for each state's unionized workforce. The table shows the share of union workers that were female, black, white, Latino, or Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI). In order to overcome problems with the small sample size in many states, the data refer to the period from 2007 through 2011 (Figures 1 and 2 covered 2011 only). For comparison's sake, **Table 2** contains the same information for the entire workforce of each state (excluding the self-employed and the military).

Women made up 45.7 percent of the national unionized workforce in the period 2007-2011. Twenty-four states, however, had female rates above the national average and four had rates that were higher than 50 percent: the District of Columbia (54.2 percent), Vermont (53.5 percent), Massachusetts (51.0 percent), and Oregon (50.5 percent). At the bottom of the range there were five states that fell under 40 percent: Louisiana (38.7 percent), West Virginia (37.6 percent), Wyoming (36.6 percent), Missouri (35.1 percent), and Indiana (33.8 percent). A comparison with Table 2 – which shows the gender distribution for the overall workforce, not just union workers – demonstrates that women were slightly under-represented in the union workforce. Women were 47.6 percent of the overall workforce, but only 45.7 percent of unionized workers. As discussed in an earlier CEPR report,¹ a state's public-sector unionization rate is an important determinant of the share of women in the unionized workforce. A higher public-sector unionization rate generally means a higher share of women in the unionized workforce.

In terms of race and ethnicity,² whites were slightly over-represented in the unionized workforce. Whites were 69.1 percent of union workers, but 68.4 percent of the overall workforce. African Americans were noticeably more likely to be unionized than the rest of the workforce. Blacks were 13.1 percent of the unionized workforce, but only 11.1 percent of the overall workforce. Meanwhile, Latino and AAPI workers were under-represented in the union workforce. Latinos were 12.2 percent of union workers, compared to 14.3 percent of the overall workforce. AAPI workers were 4.7 percent of the unionized workforce, but 5.3 percent of all workers.

Across the states, the racial distribution of union workers strongly followed the racial distribution of the overall workforce. For example, states with a high share of AAPIs in the overall workforce, such as Hawaii (71.1 percent) and California (14.1 percent), also had a large proportion of AAPIs in the unionized workforce. A similar pattern holds across the states for other racial and ethnic groups.

1 Schmitt, John. 2010. "The Unions of the States." Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research. <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/unions-states-2010-02.pdf>. The tables and figures here update data that appeared in that report.

2 We define five mutually exclusive racial and ethnic categories: whites, blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), and all other racial and ethnic groups.

TABLE 1
Basic Demographic Characteristics of Union Workforce, by State, 2007-2011

	Unionization Rate, 2011 (%)	Total union workers, 2011	Share of union workforce (%)					
			Female	White	Black	Latino	AAPI	Other
Alabama	11.1	192,212	47.1	72.4	24.5	1.0	1.2	1.0
Alaska	24.3	72,642	43.8	79.1	4.4	3.1	6.0	7.4
Arizona	8.6	183,164	43.2	71.0	4.7	19.3	2.6	2.4
Arkansas	5.9	57,119	44.7	77.7	16.9	2.5	1.9	1.0
California	18.5	2,528,495	49.1	48.5	8.4	30.0	12.1	1.0
Colorado	8.8	202,768	43.2	73.8	4.8	19.2	1.7	0.6
Connecticut	17.6	271,854	49.0	78.8	10.4	8.3	2.1	0.4
DC	12.1	27,848	54.2	25.7	63.2	8.5	2.5	0.1
Delaware	12.8	41,434	45.1	68.7	25.3	3.4	1.9	0.7
Florida	7.3	557,104	47.2	63.8	17.8	16.2	1.8	0.5
Georgia	5.1	186,435	43.5	59.0	35.1	3.1	2.2	0.7
Hawaii	24	118,403	42.4	14.3	2.2	6.6	76.0	1.0
Idaho	7.4	36,333	41.0	88.9	2.2	6.6	0.7	1.6
Illinois	16.9	929,147	40.2	67.6	17.5	12.2	2.3	0.4
Indiana	12.7	331,441	33.8	85.7	8.4	4.7	0.5	0.6
Iowa	13.3	187,789	43.6	90.2	2.8	3.9	2.4	0.7
Kansas	9	128,011	42.3	84.1	6.7	4.7	2.1	2.4
Kentucky	10.3	172,740	41.0	87.3	11.2	1.3	0.2	0.0
Louisiana	5.9	90,203	38.7	61.3	34.8	2.9	0.9	0.2
Maine	13.7	74,565	47.2	97.3	0.2	0.7	0.7	1.2
Maryland	14	348,200	48.5	51.3	40.3	4.1	3.6	0.7
Massachusetts	16	445,526	51.0	85.4	5.8	5.9	2.7	0.2
Michigan	19.2	702,619	46.3	78.1	15.7	3.4	2.1	0.7
Minnesota	16.3	389,230	47.1	91.3	3.4	2.6	1.7	1.0
Mississippi	7	73,384	47.0	62.9	33.7	1.9	1.1	0.4
Missouri	11.8	315,751	35.1	83.6	12.3	2.3	0.7	1.0
Montana	15.7	54,722	48.2	92.3	0.2	2.0	0.5	5.1
Nebraska	10.7	82,750	49.5	85.5	4.7	7.0	1.8	0.9
Nevada	17.3	174,508	41.2	60.3	9.0	21.5	7.9	1.4
New	12	77,006	48.8	95.7	1.7	1.4	0.6	0.6
New Jersey	18.8	641,786	47.2	65.1	16.2	13.2	5.2	0.3
New Mexico	10.4	65,102	47.2	41.1	2.4	40.7	3.1	12.7
New York	26.4	2,067,930	48.7	62.4	18.7	13.9	4.5	0.4
North	4.4	148,409	44.6	62.7	28.7	3.7	1.3	3.5
North Dakota	8.6	27,257	45.3	94.2	0.6	0.4	1.0	3.8
Ohio	15.1	705,666	42.4	85.0	11.7	2.1	0.5	0.7
Oklahoma	7.8	112,244	44.9	74.3	7.3	3.9	1.1	13.5
Oregon	17.4	285,261	50.5	86.8	2.8	5.7	3.0	1.7
Pennsylvania	16.2	845,024	43.2	84.1	11.3	3.2	1.1	0.3
Rhode Island	17.4	80,937	49.2	86.9	6.1	4.7	1.9	0.4
South	5.7	86,265	46.6	59.2	35.6	2.8	2.4	0.0
South Dakota	6.8	23,102	48.9	89.3	2.9	2.5	0.2	5.2
Tennessee	6.2	139,478	41.1	72.7	23.8	1.8	1.2	0.5
Texas	6.1	642,290	43.3	51.2	13.8	31.4	2.6	1.0
Utah	7.5	81,633	42.0	88.3	0.5	7.5	3.2	0.6
Vermont	13.3	39,237	53.5	97.1	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.8
Virginia	5.3	197,589	45.9	70.5	21.8	3.3	4.0	0.4
Washington	21.2	557,227	44.9	82.8	3.8	4.5	6.8	2.1
West Virginia	15.4	102,427	37.6	94.8	3.7	0.4	0.5	0.6
Wisconsin	15.3	357,736	46.1	87.8	5.7	4.2	2.1	0.2
Wyoming	8.7	20,968	36.6	89.4	1.0	7.5	0.7	1.5
United States	13.3	16,280,971	45.7	69.1	13.1	12.2	4.7	1.0

TABLE 2
Basic Demographic Characteristics of All Employees, by State, 2007-2011
(percent of total employees in each state, except total)

	Unionization Rate, 2011 (%)	Total employ- ees, 2011	Female	Share of all employees (%)				
				White	Black	Latino	AAPI	Other
Alabama	11.1	1,781,892	48.3	70.6	23.0	4.0	1.3	1.0
Alaska	24.3	305,477	47.1	74.5	4.4	4.2	7.3	9.7
Arizona	8.6	2,499,749	45.9	63.5	3.6	27.7	3.0	2.3
Arkansas	5.9	1,116,837	48.3	77.6	13.6	5.2	2.2	1.4
California	18.5	13,927,059	45.8	45.1	5.7	34.5	14.1	0.7
Colorado	8.8	2,185,124	45.5	76.3	3.8	16.5	2.8	0.7
Connecticut	17.6	1,540,076	48.7	76.9	8.3	9.8	4.6	0.4
DC	12.1	281,431	51.1	44.1	41.4	10.4	3.9	0.2
Delaware	12.8	370,598	49.1	69.1	20.4	6.9	3.2	0.5
Florida	7.3	7,282,170	48.0	61.5	14.0	21.3	2.7	0.4
Georgia	5.1	3,878,154	47.7	60.2	28.4	7.5	3.5	0.5
Hawaii	24.0	525,085	48.3	17.9	2.8	6.7	71.1	1.4
Idaho	7.4	594,347	45.4	85.6	0.9	9.8	1.8	2.0
Illinois	16.9	5,410,461	47.2	70.1	11.7	13.0	4.9	0.3
Indiana	12.7	2,683,136	47.6	86.9	7.0	4.8	0.9	0.4
Iowa	13.3	1,388,048	48.9	89.8	2.5	4.7	2.4	0.6
Kansas	9.0	1,267,307	47.7	83.2	5.1	6.9	2.8	2.0
Kentucky	10.3	1,676,236	48.2	88.7	6.8	2.9	1.2	0.4
Louisiana	5.9	1,713,707	48.4	66.7	27.9	3.6	1.4	0.5
Maine	13.7	554,468	50.1	95.7	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.3
Maryland	14.0	2,550,278	49.2	57.4	28.3	8.1	5.9	0.4
Massachusetts	16.0	2,882,824	49.4	81.6	5.8	6.5	5.8	0.3
Michigan	19.2	3,843,825	48.4	81.3	11.0	3.4	3.5	0.8
Minnesota	16.3	2,460,645	48.6	88.1	3.7	3.9	3.4	0.9
Mississippi	7.0	1,081,734	49.7	62.8	32.3	3.2	0.9	0.7
Missouri	11.8	2,534,582	49.5	84.8	10.1	2.5	1.6	1.0
Montana	15.7	376,724	50.2	91.8	0.8	2.2	0.9	4.4
Nebraska	10.7	828,470	48.7	85.5	3.9	7.5	1.8	1.3
Nevada	17.3	1,049,594	45.0	60.7	7.6	21.5	9.2	1.0
New Hampshire	12.0	617,752	48.8	93.7	1.3	2.0	2.1	0.9
New Jersey	18.8	3,817,022	47.4	60.9	11.7	18.4	8.8	0.3
New Mexico	10.4	724,865	47.5	47.3	1.8	40.4	2.3	8.3
New York	26.4	7,915,796	48.3	63.5	13.7	14.7	7.6	0.5
North Carolina	4.4	3,595,365	48.6	68.2	20.3	7.1	2.3	2.1
North Dakota	8.6	318,625	49.0	90.5	1.2	1.3	1.2	5.9
Ohio	15.1	4,813,018	49.1	85.4	10.0	2.5	1.5	0.6
Oklahoma	7.8	1,458,350	47.1	72.1	7.4	6.5	1.8	12.3
Oregon	17.4	1,575,193	47.5	83.1	1.8	8.8	4.4	1.9
Pennsylvania	16.2	5,351,907	48.6	84.6	8.8	4.1	2.1	0.4
Rhode Island	17.4	453,513	49.7	82.2	5.5	8.8	3.0	0.5
South Carolina	5.7	1,724,647	49.5	69.2	25.3	3.6	1.3	0.5
South Dakota	6.8	359,235	49.5	91.4	1.0	2.3	1.3	4.1
Tennessee	6.2	2,504,338	48.5	77.4	16.3	4.0	1.7	0.6
Texas	6.1	10,213,564	45.2	48.1	11.0	35.8	4.5	0.6
Utah	7.5	1,148,485	43.6	83.7	1.2	10.8	3.3	1.0
Vermont	13.3	290,578	50.0	95.8	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.1
Virginia	5.3	3,548,822	48.6	68.2	18.3	7.0	6.1	0.4
Washington	21.2	2,729,054	47.4	77.0	3.2	8.2	9.2	2.3
West Virginia	15.4	671,824	46.9	94.4	3.5	0.8	0.6	0.7
Wisconsin	15.3	2,537,792	49.4	87.4	4.5	4.8	2.2	1.2
Wyoming	8.7	250,502	45.2	90.1	1.0	6.4	1.0	1.6
United States	13.3	125,210,285	47.6	68.4	11.1	14.3	5.3	1.0